

Docket #: Broyle.G-01

APPLICATION

Of

Gale Dean Broyles

For

UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

On

Spacer Standoff for Towel Rods

Sheets of Drawings: Four (4)

TITLE: Spacer Standoff for Towel Rods

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 INCORPORATION BY REFERENCE:

Applicant(s) hereby incorporate herein by reference, any and all U. S. patents and U.S. patent applications cited or referred to in this application.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION:

10 This invention relates generally to bathroom fixtures and more particularly to a towel rod support system for advantageously placing a second towel rod relative to a first towel rod.

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART:

The following art defines the present state of this field:

15

Bernhardt, U.S. 1,956,340 describes an extra towel holder for use with a conventional towel holding rod and rod holding wall bracket and comprising an extra towel holder rod, a bracket supporting said extra towel holder rod, said latter bracket comprising a long leg and a short leg forming an acute angle therebetween, a hooked portion on the end of said short leg
20 adapted to be snapped over the conventional towel holder rod and a turned down end on said longer leg adapted to be contacted to the wall on which the conventional towel holder bracket is secured.

25

Gaffney, U.S. 2,401,148 describes a towel rack of a type including a bar having a substantially flat top and supporting in a horizontal position, and members rising from the side edges of the bar of polygonal cross section and formed with concave sides and upper ends providing sharpened upper edges adapted for engagement with a cloth article placed on the bar to prevent sliding movement of the article thereon.

Stewart, U.S. 2,705,568 describes a device comprising a bracket having an outwardly extending arm, an upwardly extending hook formed integrally with the outer end of said arm, and intermediate support member having a socket and an upwardly extending hook formed integrally with the outer end thereof, and outer support member having a socket formed in its underside adjacent its rear end, said hooks being snugly receivable in adjacent sockets and a pair of laterally extending support bars affixed to each of said support members.

Chen, U.S. 5,875,903 describes a bathroom hanger rack having two base seats, two hollow casings, two bolts, two hollow balls, two caps, and a rod. Each hollow ball has a threaded hole, a groove, a middle interior, and a lower interior. Each base seat has a middle portion and two lateral portions. Each middle portion has an oblong hole. Each lateral portion has a round hole receiving a screw. A hollow post is disposed on the middle portion of the base seat. Each hollow ball is disposed on each respective hollow casing. A bottom of each hollow post is enclosed by a ring. Each groove receives the rod. A bolt passes through the respective threaded hole and is inserted in the hollow post. Each hollow casing has an interior receiving the respective base seat. Each threaded hole receives the respective cap.

Chang, U.S. 6,216,889 describes a rod rack supporting structure comprising two support frames, a rod, and two locating members. The support frames are provided with a cross rod which is in turn provided with a plurality of retainers for retaining the rod. The retainers are provided in both plate surfaces of the opening thereof with a slide block. The locating members are provided in the inner side thereof with an arcuate slot and a slide slot corresponding to the slide block. The rod rack is securely located by the two slide blocks, which are engaged with the two slide slots.

Brunsden, U.S. 6,561,364 describes a portable shelf for mounting on an existing, conventional, wall affixed towel bar using only friction and gravitationally induced forces. The shelf is capable of holding sundry articles customarily found in a bathroom while also

providing a bar that may be used to hold towels. The shelf is preferably formed from two brackets pierced by multiple rods preferably of uniform cross-section. More than two brackets may be used resulting in a shelf that has enhanced stiffness. The brackets have a side appearance resembling the capital Greek letter gamma with a vertical back that

5 conforms to the wall, a top that is pierced by multiple rods lying in a horizontal plane, a bottom pierced by at least one rod that is spaced from the wall, and a front that extends downward from a point in front of the towel bar to a point that is behind the towel bar and closer to the wall. The shelf's width may be adjusted by sliding the brackets on the rods. The shelf is mounted by looping its bottom over the towel bar and lowering the shelf onto the

10 towel bar.

Pan, U.S. 6,651,830 describes a towel rack. The rack includes two fastening bases, two retaining heads, and a towel rod. The fastening bases are fastened onto a wall surface such that the two fastening bases are separated from each other by a predetermined distance. The

15 retaining heads are joined with the fastening bases for retaining two longitudinal ends of the towel rod.

Our prior art search with abstracts described above teaches: towel bars, rods and racks of various types, a rod rack supporting structure, an extra towel holder, a bathroom hanger rack, and a portable shelf for mounting on a towel bar, but does not teach a universally adaptable towel rod standoff with extension for mounting towel rods one above the next with a lower rod extending further away from a mounting surface than an upper rod. The present invention fulfills these needs and provides further related advantages as described in the following summary.

25

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention teaches certain benefits in construction and use which give rise to the objectives described below.

In most bathrooms there are too few towel rods for the number of towels that are needed to be hung for everyday use. This results in cramming too many towels onto each towel rod, hanging towels over shower curtains and other bathroom objects, and other undesirable practices. Further towel rods may be installed, but too often there is not enough wall surface to mount further towel rods, so that rods often must be mounted one under the next. This results in towels hung on upper rods hanging over and in contact with lower towels, an unsanitary practice and inconvenient in use as well. The present invention offers a solution by enabling a lower towel rod to be mounted in a position that is below a first towel rod but positioned further away from the mounting wall so that towels hung on the upper towel rod fall behind towels hung on the lower rod. However, the style conscious person would wish to have the lower towel rod and towel rod holders to be identical to the upper ones. Since no extensions of commercially available towel rods are available, there is a need for a towel rod holder extension that will accept most towel rod holders (so they can be selected to match existing ones) and yet will position them further from the mounting wall so as to achieve the objectives defined below. In that towel rod holders are manufactured in a variety of styles, sizes and forms, but generally comply with one of only several mounting bolt patterns, the present invention is able to be used effectively with many existing towel rod holders. In this invention, a cylindrical base portion is mounted on the wall and extends outwardly, while a cylindrical extension portion engages the base portion and extends outwardly further. A disc shaped cap portion engages the extension portion. A fastener engages the cap portion and extends through the extension portion and the base portion into the mounting surface, thereby securing the apparatus. The cap portion further provides a receiver adapted for engaging any one of a variety of standard towel rod holders.

25

A primary objective of the present invention is to provide an apparatus and method of use of such apparatus that yields advantages not taught by the prior art.

Another objective is to provide such an invention capable of mounting a second towel rod further from a mounting surface than a previously mounted towel rod so as to allow towels from both rods to hang without mutual interference and to enable improved access to both towel rods.

5

A further objective is to provide such an invention capable of accepting a range of towel rod holder bolt patterns.

A still further objective is to provide such an invention capable of being fabricated in a 10 variety of styles, forms and sizes at relatively low cost.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following more detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which illustrate, by way of example, the principles of the invention.

15

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- The accompanying drawings illustrate the present invention. In such drawings:
- Figure 1 is a perspective exploded view of the invention with a robe hook accessory;
- Figures 2-4 are perspective views thereof as assembled with the robe hook accessory, a cup holder accessory and a toothbrush holder accessory respectively;
- Figure 5 is a side elevational exploded view of the invention;
- Figure 6 is a plan view taken along cutting line 6-6 in Fig. 5;
- Figure 7 is a sectional view taken along cutting line 7-7 in Fig. 5 and showing in phantom 25 line a towel rod holder; and
- Figure 8 is a perspective view of the invention as mounted and supporting towel rods and towels in a preferred embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The above described drawing figures illustrate the invention in at least one of its preferred 5 embodiments, which is further defined in detail in the following description. Those having ordinary skill in the art may be able to make alterations and modifications in the present invention without departing from its spirit and scope. Therefore, it must be understood that the illustrated embodiments have been set forth only for the purposes of example and that they should not be taken as limiting the invention as defined in the following.

10 As previously described, the present invention, in a first embodiment, is a towel rod holder supporting apparatus having a cylindrical base portion 10 for placement against a mounting surface 20 and for extending outwardly therefrom. The base portion 10 preferably is attached to the mounting surface 20 using a base portion fastening means 5', preferably a 15 common screw, as shown in Fig. 7, for securing the base portion 10 onto the mounting surface 20. A cylindrical extension portion 30 engages the base portion 10 and extends further outwardly therefrom. A cap portion 40 engages the extension portion 30 and provides cap holes 42 for mounting the apparatus. A first fastening means, such as the screws shown in Fig. 1, are engaged with the cap holes 42 and extend through the extension 20 portion 30 and the base portion 10 into the mounting surface 20 and are preferably captured in wall board mounting hardware 5 as shown in Fig. 1, thereby securing the apparatus to the mounting surface 20 as best seen in Fig. 7. Preferably, the invention further comprises an accessory that may take the form of a robe hook 50, a cup holder 52 (Fig. 3), a toothbrush holder 54 (Fig. 4), or other possible accessories useful in a bathroom where space is limited. 25 It is shown in Fig. 7 that the base portion 10 provides an annular external recess 12, and both the extension portion 30 and the accessories, as shown by the robe hook 50, provide an annular lip 36 and 56 respectively, sized for being received within the recess 12 so that these parts are able to be nested for improved ease of assembly, axial stability and improved visual appearance. Similarly, the extension portion 30 provides an annular internal recess 32 for

accepting the cap portion 40. These means for nesting are considered critical to the purpose of this invention in all of its embodiments.

The cap portion 40 further provides a receiving means 44' adapted for engaging a second 5 fastening means 62 (Fig. 7); whereby a towel rod holder 60 may be mounted on the apparatus using the second fastening means 62 which are threaded into the receiving means 44', preferably nuts positioned in slots 46 so that they may be set at a desired distance apart. Therefore, the receiving means 44' is linearly adjustable in slots 46.

10 As shown in Fig. 1, the base portion 10, extension portion 30 and cap portion 40 each provide a keying means for assuring that these three parts are mounted in a preferred rotational clock orientation and to prevent independent rotation of these parts after assembly. The keying means in the cap portion 40 is preferably a shallow radial groove 45 at its periphery and in the distal edge of the extension portion 30 it is an inwardly directed upset 15 35 that fits into the groove 45. At the proximal edge of the extension portion 30 the keying means is a cutout 35' at the lower rim and in both the accessory portion 50, 52 or 54, as well as the base portion 10, it is a small outwardly extending upset 55 and 15 respectively, in the outer periphery of these parts that mates with the cutout 35'. The accessory portion also provides a cutout 55' for mating with upset 15 in the base portion 10. Of course other and 20 alternate means for assuring that the several portions all are clock position aligned may be utilized by those of skill in the art. The primary purpose of these keying means is to assure that the holes in the several portions are aligned.

In a further embodiment of the above described invention, clearly, it is desirable to mount a 25 first commercially available towel rod in its provided towel rod holders 60 wherein the towel rod holders 60 may be supported by the apparatus of the present invention so that the towel rod is placed at a greater distance from the mounting surface 20 than would be possible without the present invention.

In a still further embodiment of the above described invention, clearly, it is desirable to mount a first towel rod at a given distance from the mounting surface 20 and then to mount a further towel rod using the present invention to positioning the second towel rod further from the mounting surface than the first towel rod so as to take advantage of the hanging of 5 towels on both of the rods without mutual interference. This embodiment is described as follows:

A pair of towel rods with supporting apparatus comprises a pair of spaced apart towel rod holders 60 placed against a mounting surface 20 and held in place by a second fastening 10 means 62, and a towel rod 70 held between the rod holders 60. Positioned below the towel rod holders 60, a pair of cylindrical base portions are placed against the mounting surface and extend outwardly therefrom. A pair of cylindrical extension portions each engaging one 15 of the base portions extend outwardly therefrom; and a pair of cap portions are each engaged with one of the extension portions, the cap portions 40 each providing cap holes 42 for receiving a first fastening means 44 engaged with the cap holes 42 and extending through the extension portions 30 and the base portions 10 into the mounting surface 20, thereby securing the cap portions 40, the extension portions 30 and the base portions 10 to the mounting surface 20. The cap portions 40 each further provide the receiving means 44 adapted for engaging the second fastening means 62. A further pair of towel rod holders 60 20 are mounted on the cap portions 40 using the second fastening means 62. A second towel rod 70 is engaged with the second towel rod holders 60, which rod 70 is therefore positioned further away from the mounting surface 20 than the first towel rod 70.

The figures show the various elements of this invention as round or as having a circular 25 cylindrical sidewall, however, it should be understood that the shape of these elements may be non-round as obvious variants, i.e., square, rectangular, triangular or any other shape desired.

The enablements described in detail above are considered novel over the prior art of record and are considered critical to the operation of the instant invention and to the achievement of the above described objectives. The words used in this specification to describe the invention and its various embodiments are to be understood not only in the sense of their commonly defined meanings, but to include by special definition in this specification: 5 structure, material or acts beyond the scope of the commonly defined meanings. Thus if an element can be understood in the context of this specification as including more than one meaning, then its use must be understood as being generic to all possible meanings supported by the specification and by the word or words describing the element.

10

The definitions of the words or elements of this described invention and its various embodiments are, therefore, defined in this specification to include not only the combination of elements which are literally set forth, but all equivalent structure, material or acts for performing substantially the same function in substantially the same way to obtain 15 substantially the same result. In this sense it is therefore contemplated that an equivalent substitution of two or more elements may be made for any one of the elements in the invention and its various embodiments or that a single element may be substituted for two or more elements in a claim.

20 Changes from the claimed subject matter as viewed by a person with ordinary skill in the art, now known or later devised, are expressly contemplated as being equivalents within the scope of the invention and its various embodiments. Therefore, obvious substitutions now or later known to one with ordinary skill in the art are defined to be within the scope of the defined elements. The invention and its various embodiments are thus to be understood to 25 include what is specifically illustrated and described above, what is conceptually equivalent, what can be obviously substituted, and also what essentially incorporates the essential idea of the invention.

While the invention has been described with reference to at least one preferred embodiment, it is to be clearly understood by those skilled in the art that the invention is not limited thereto. Rather, the scope of the invention is to be interpreted only in conjunction with the appended claims and it is made clear, here, that the inventor(s) believe that the claimed 5 subject matter is the invention.